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# ANONYMOUS WOMEN? GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS AND GENDER.

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## JIM ROGERS

One of the rapidly changing elements in gambling environments is the increasing participation of women in many forms of gambling, and the growing proportions of problem gamblers who are female. It is known that women who develop gambling problems differ from men in a range of ways: for example they are more likely to have co-morbidities such as anxiety and depression, and to gamble as an 'escape' from such co-occurring problems. Gamblers Anonymous (GA) has a number of meetings across New Zealand as it does in many countries across the world. Globally this organisation provides one of the most widely available and accessible forms of help for problem gamblers. This paper reports on a literature review which included a gender analysis of available studies which provide empirical data in relation to GA. This is supplemented with observations made over a one year period at a contemporary GA meeting in the North of England. The role of women in the partner organisation, Gam Anon (a meeting for family and supporters of problem gamblers) is high and has been shown to be crucial for many of the men who attend GA. The participation of women in GA itself remains limited. The development in the USA and now in England of 'women preferred' meetings is discussed. This provides what may be a more acceptable and useful development for many female problem gamblers, and parallels what is happening in drug and alcohol services. Given the rapid increase in numbers of female problem gamblers it is concluded that further research is required into their particular needs and that the process and outcomes of women only meetings, whether in GA or some other format, is studied in more detail. This would help policy makers and service providers to make more informed decisions about gender specific services.



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